

HAPPENINGS at the SAB

...ensuring a solid technical basis for environmental protection

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



At the start of a new fiscal year, the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) is poised for action. The most visible sign may be the Administrator's appointment of 19 new Members and 26 existing members to the SAB's Standing Committees, as part of the Board's regular appointment process. You will soon see a special issue of Happenings entirely devoted to the Board's membership for Fiscal Year 2003.

The fiscal new year, however, has brought more than new Members to the Board. The Executive Committee met on October 1-2, 2002 to address a full agenda. In addition to reviewing and approving three SAB reports, the Executive Committee reviewed a proposed Operating Plan for Fiscal Year 2003 that includes opportunities to give advice to the Agency on major scientific and technical issues. The SAB Staff and the Executive Committee, through its Policies and Procedures Subcommittee, will continue to work on the high priority task of improving policies and procedures at the Board. The Agency has provided resources to support these activities. The Executive Committee and senior leadership at the highest levels of the Agency have committed to take a strategic look at the Board's structure, organization and composition with the goal of presenting a reorganization plan, if one is deemed needed, to the Administrator in a year's time.

Here are a few highlights of the plans for Fiscal Year 2003.

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In terms of projects, the Board will be reviewing the Agency's draft *State of the Environment Report*, as well as a range of cross-cutting scientific issues, such as the Agency's Contaminated Sediments Science Plan. It will also be undertaking a "self-initiated" project on "Valuing the Protection of Ecological Systems and Services" in close partnership with Agency program and regional offices. A full presentation of the Board's FY 2003 projects will be posted on the SAB Website later this month.

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In terms of policies and procedures, the Board starts the fiscal year with three major new tools: a new brochure, *Overview of Panel Formation at the EPA Science Advisory Board*; new CD-ROM-based ethics training for all SAB Members and Consultants; and use of a new financial disclosure form to evaluate conflict of interest for Special Government Employees. In addition, the Staff Office has begun to hold semi-annual meetings with the public to hear ideas about improving Policies and Procedures at the Board. Finally, the Staff Office also has made two major commitments for the upcoming year. It will work to develop a brochure modeled on the National Academy of Sciences brochure "Roles of the Panel Chair," to describe the roles of different parties in the SAB advisory process (e.g., committee and panel chairs, panel members, EPA Staff, SAB staff, and the public), and how the public can participate. It will also focus on improving communication through the website and other mechanisms.

The Executive Committee initiative to study and potentially redesign the Board's structure, organization, and composition is just getting underway. Members of the special Subcommittee will examine whether the current structure and size of the Board enable the Board's keeping pace with and, even more importantly, anticipating the scientific and technical issues facing the Agency. They will consider whether and how the structure, organization and composition of the Board can be improved. We in the Staff Office are looking forward to working with the Subcommittee and with Agency staff and members of the public they will engage on the topic. Our goal is to support the Board so it can continue providing the highest quality science advice possible to the Agency.

Vanessa T. Vu, Ph.D.
Director, EPA Science Advisory Board Staff Office

TENTATIVE SAB MEETING CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

Several of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) meetings noted below have been announced in the Federal Register (FR), together with additional background information. Readers can automatically receive e-mailed copies of FR Notices by subscribing to the SAB Listserver; see Section Updates below.

If a series of meetings is anticipated, the number of the meeting in the series is indicated in parentheses; e.g., "(#2)".

OCTOBER



1-2

Committee: Executive Committee (EC)
Topic(s): Review Meeting
Purpose: Reviewed committee reports.
Location: Hotel Washington, Washington, DC
Chair: *Dr. William Glaze, University of North Carolina*
DFO: *Mr. A. Robert Flaak*
Email: flaak.robert@epa.gov

23F

Committee: Environmental Health Committee's (EHC) Human Health Research Strategy (HHR) Review Panel
Topic(s): HHR Teleconference
Purpose: Discuss the charge directed by the Office of Research and Development on their HHR document that presents a conceptual framework for the future human health research.
Location: Ariel Rios North, Room 6013
Chair: *Dr. Henry Anderson, Wisconsin Division of Public Health*
DFO: *Dr. Suhair "Sue" Shallal*
Email: shallal.suhair@epa.gov

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30-31

Committee: Executive Committee's (EC) Contaminated Sediments Science Plan Panel
Topic(s): Contaminated Sediments Science Plan
Purpose: Review "The Contaminated Sediments Science Plan" which is a mechanism for the US EPA to develop and coordinate Agency-wide science activities in the contaminated sediments area.
Location: Ariel Rios Building, Room 6013
Chair: *Dr. Michael McFarland, University of Utah*
DFO: *Mr. Lawrence Martin*
Email: martin.lawrence@epa.gov

NOVEMBER



20-21

Committee: Environmental Health Committee's (EHC) Human Health Research Strategy Review Panel
Topic(s): Human Health Research Strategy (HHRIS)
Purpose: To review the Human Health Research Strategy document.
Location: RTP, NC (Site TBD)
Chair: *Dr. Henry Anderson, Wisconsin Division of Public Health*
DFO: *Dr. Suhair "Sue" Shallal*
Email: shallal.suhair@epa.gov

COMMITTEE
ACTIVITIES
IN
SEPTEMBER



On September 10-12, the Executive Committee's (EC) Metals Assessment Panel heard briefings from EPA, took public comment, and prepared their report on the draft Action Plan. In preparation for this meeting, teams of panelists assigned to respond to the charge questions prepared and circulated preliminary responses. Most of the meeting was spent writing and editing sections of the report and then considering the report for the approval. On September 12, the Panel approved its draft report conditional upon an opportunity for the panelists to confirm that requested changes had been correctly made. That opportunity was made and the Panel's approved report was forwarded to the Executive Committee for consideration at its October 1-2, 2002 meeting.

On September 24, the Multi-Agency Radiological Laboratory Analytical Protocols (MARLAP) Review Panel of the Radiation Advisory Committee conducted closure edits to their first public draft report dated August 29, 2002. This is the second face-to-face public review meeting of the MARLAP Review Panel. The first face-to-face meeting was held on April 23-25, 2002.

On September 24-26, the Radiation Advisory Committee (RAC) met to plan and schedule

reviews for Fiscal Year 2003 and receive briefings of topics of interest from the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air (ORIA) staff. The FY 2003 projects include an advisory on an updated methodology for estimating cancer risks from exposure to ionizing radiation, as well as an advisory and consultation on draft Multi-Agency Radiological Survey & Site Investigation Manual (MARSSIM) Supplements dealing with materials and equipment, as well as subsurface soils. The RAC also discussed the new procedures in the panel solicitation, selection and formation process, which applies to all activities of the EPA's Science Advisory Board.

STATUS OF FORMATION
OF SAB PANELS

The Board has developed a revised Panel Formation process for the recruitment of *ad-hoc* review panels. For the latest detailed information, please visit our website, www.epa.gov/sab/panels/paneltopics.html.

SAB REPORTS IN PROGRESS



a PROJECTS DUE FOR THE DEC 5 EC TELECONFERENCE

DWC

- 1) Long Term Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule Proposal and Stage II Disinfection/Disinfectant

By-Product (DBP) Rule
Proposal Report

EC Subcommittee

- 2) Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards Report

RAC

- 3) Multi Agency Radiological Lab Analytic Protocols Reports (MARLAP)

b *PROJECTS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE EC APPROVAL (CASAC & COUNCIL)*

There are none at this time.

c *PROJECTS THAT HAVE RECEIVED EC APPROVAL AND AWAIT COMPLETION*

EHC

- 1) Review of Draft Trichloroethylene Health Risk Assessment: Synthesis and Characterization: An SAB Report

EC Subcommittee

- 1) Underground Storage Tanks (UST) Cleanup and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Subtitle C Program Benefits, Costs, and Impacts Assessments: An EPA Science Advisory Board Advisory
- 2) Review of Metals Action Plan

ABSTRACTS OF NEW REPORTS

- a** A Framework for Reporting on Ecological Condition: An SAB Report and Executive Summary
EPA-SAB-EPEC-02-009 and
EPA-SAB-EPEC-02-009A

The Ecological Processes and Effects Committee (EPEC) of the EPA Science Advisory Board reviewed the framework for assessing and reporting on ecological conditions. To accomplish these tasks, the Agency would benefit from development of a systematic framework for assessing and reporting on ecological condition. The framework would: help assure that the required information is measured systematically by the Agency's programs; provide a template for assembling information across Agency programs and from other agencies; and provide an organizing tool for synthesizing large numbers of indicators into a scientifically defensible, yet understandable, report on ecological condition.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Agency with a sample framework that may serve as a guide for designing a system to assess, and then report on, ecological condition at a local, regional, or national scale. The sample framework is intended as an organizing tool that may help the Agency decide what ecological attributes to measure and how to aggregate those measurements into an understandable picture of ecological integrity.

The SAB framework provides a checklist of ecological attributes that should be considered when evaluating the health of ecological systems. It also provides an organizational scheme for assembling hundreds

of individual parameters into a few understandable attributes. We hope that the SAB framework will foster more systematic collection of ecological information by the Agency, provide a locus for integrating that information among programs both within and outside the Agency, and catalyze a trend towards environmental reporting that addresses the essential attributes of ecological systems.

Ecological systems are complex, and it has proved extremely difficult to answer the holistic questions that people ask about them - "How healthy is my watershed? Will native species be here for my children and grandchildren to enjoy?" With this report, we provide a way to integrate scientific data into the information necessary to answer these questions, and ultimately to foster improved management and protection of ecological systems. We look forward to your response to this report, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further with you as the Agency moves forward with a report on the state of the environment.

b Review of the Air Quality Criteria Document for Particulate Matter: Third External Review Draft (EPA 600/P-99/002aC): A CASAC Review EPA-SAB-CASAC-LTR-02-003

The Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee PM Review Panel reviewed the draft document *Proposed Methodology for Particulate Matter Risk Analysis for Selected Urban Areas* that outlines part of the procedures to be used in preparing the human health risk analysis for PM_{2.5} that will accompany the Staff Paper on

the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Particulate Matter (PM).

The Panel noted the importance that this risk assessment analysis has in the primary standard setting process for PM. While prior EPA policy and the legislative history of the Clean Air Act indicate that assessment of quantitative risks should not play a determinant role in recommending primary, health-based standards, such estimates can provide important information to the Administrator in assessing alternative standard levels. The human health risk assessment analysis helps to provide a quantitative link between the science described in the Criteria Document and the policy implications and recommendations in the Staff Paper and thus, we believe that it is critical that the risk assessment analysis be done at the state of the current science in this field.

In response to the charge questions, the Panel:

- 1) concludes that the general methodology as described in the report is appropriate;
- 2) commends the Agency for starting the process with the recognition of the need for: a) sensitivity analyses; and b) for building them into the risk analysis process. The Panel also noted other aspects of the problem that may be useful to examine as well, including a) the seasonality in the baseline rates; and b) the concentration/response functions for health effects;
- 3) agrees that the proportional rollback approach is the appropriate method. However, a rationale should be offered for the decision to base the rollback percentage on the "above background" portion of the "as is" concentration distribution.;

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4) believes that the most critical aspect of the choice of concentration-response functions for $PM_{2.5}$ is providing a clear rationale for each choice;

5) feels that the current review document could be improved by starting the document by describing the set of assumptions that are necessary to make the analysis to be subsequently presented. These assumptions include the causality of effects by particulate matter mass, constancy in levels of individual activity leading to equivalent exposures to the ambient particulate matter and equal toxicity of the particulate matter within the geographical region for which the analysis is being performed.

COMPUTER NEWS



(1) SAB Website is within the EPA Home Page. You are invited to visit the SAB Website at URL: <http://www.epa.gov/sab>

The site offers such features as:

- (a) Full-text reports for FY1994-FY2002
- (b) Background information about the structure, function, and membership of the SAB
- (c) A projected six-month calendar of SAB meetings
- (d) Recent issues of HAPPENINGS

(e) Draft/final agendas of upcoming meetings and draft/final minutes of past meetings.

(2) SAB Listserver - By subscribing to the free SAB Listserver, you will automatically receive copies of all Federal Register notices announcing SAB meetings, together with brief descriptions of the topics to be covered at the meetings. These notices will be e-mailed to you within 24-hours of their publication in the Federal Register.

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Ms. Priscilla Tillery-Gadson

Phone: (202) 564-4543

Email: tillery.priscilla@epa.gov

or

by faxing your request to
(202) 501-0256.

MEMBERS/ CONSULTANTS/ STAFF NEWS

On October 1, the EPA Science Advisory Board held a reception to honor the contributions of SAB members whose appointments had ended. The ceremony was held in the Rachel Carson Great Hall and was attended by Governor Christine Todd Whitman and Deputy Administrator Linda J. Fisher.

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Outgoing Members

From left to right: John Maney, Hilary Inyang, Paul Lioy, Christine Moe, Jason Shogren, Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Terry Young, Paul Joskow, David Baker, and Deputy Administrator Linda Fisher

Also that evening, two teams from the SAB Staff received Bronze Medals: one team for their development and implementation of the new panel formation process; and the other team for the development and implementation of an improved ethics training and enhancing the evaluation of conflicts of interest for Special Government Employees at the EPA.



Panel Formation Process Team

From left to right: Diana Pozun, Thomas Miller, Angela Nugent, A. Robert Flaak, Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Kathleen White, Mary Winston, Deputy Administrator Linda Fisher, Priscilla Tillery and Ray

Spears. Missing from photograph are K. Jack Kooyoomjian, Zisa Lubarov-Walton, and Carolyn Osborne.



Conflict-of-Interest/Ethics Team

From left to right: A. Robert Flaak, Daniel Fort, Angela Nugent, Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Kenneth Wernick, Deputy Administrator Linda Fisher and Deputy Chief of Staff Ray Spears. Missing from photograph is Patricia Thomas.



In an awards presentation in September, the entire SAB Staff Office was recognized for their dedication and commitment in carrying out the mission of the EPA SAB and Staff Office.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We would like to involve our readers in enhancing the EPA SAB newsletter. One idea is to introduce a Guest Editorial each month. The editorial would be from a person whose views and insights will be of interest and of use to the Members and Consultants of the Science Advisory Board and to those who follow news about the Board through Happenings. Sometimes the Guest Editorials will feature a view from the Agency; another

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time the view of an SAB member or Consultant; and at other times the views of those who are keen observers of the science advice that affects the Agency.

We look to you, our readers of Happenings, to assist us in finding potential guest editors each month. Our aim is to make our newsletter as informative and attractive as possible for our readership. And for the witty and wise, we are also accepting bon mots. To do this, we need to hear from you. So please send all potential Guest Editorial submissions, bon mots and ideas about what you would like to see in Happenings to me, Vickie Richardson, at richardson.vickie@epa.gov. All submissions will be considered.

BON MOT



Worry not that no one knows of you;
seek to be worth knowing.
-Confucius-